

Slingerland's 69T Magnum Force

Story and Photo
by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.



The Slingerland Drum Company recently celebrated 65 years of manufacturing. Their old *Radio King* drums with solid maple shells have become quite a collector's item. Now, Slingerland has just introduced this nine-piece drum kit: the *Magnum Force*—a pure rock 'n' roll set-up.

Slingerland drums are built in five-ply; 3/8" thick with a single straight seam. Plys 2 and 4 are thick, while 1, 3 and 5 are thin.

The components of the 69T *Magnum Force* are: 16 x 24 bass drum, 10 x 6, 10 x 8, 10 x 10, 12 x 12, 13 x 13, 14 x 14 tom-toms (all double-headed), a 16 x 18 floor tom, and an 8 x 14 wood snare drum.

The 16 x 24 bass drum has 20 separate lugs with T-style tuners, along with wooden hoops inlaid with chrome stripping. Slingerland fits two pairs of disappearing spurs to this drum. Each spur has a spike tip, and a small ring to keep the spur leg from disappearing entirely into the drum when packing. The spurs are positioned at a forward angle, locked in their casing block by a wing screw and backed inside the drum by a metal plate. These four spur legs afford total stability of the drum. A felt-strip damper is installed behind both batter and front head. Also thoughtfully included are three moleskin adhesive impact pads for use on the batter head.

This drum came fitted with *Pinstripe* heads, both screened with the Slingerland logo. The extra two inches of depth makes an incredible difference in sound, as opposed to the standard 14" depths. The drum had plenty of volume, in fact, it's one of the loudest bass drums I've ever played.

Six rack toms come with the *Magnum Force*, giving a wide range of pitches. None of the drums have internal muf-

flers. The 6" has 8 lugs; the 8" has 10, and both clip-mount onto a boom tom-tom stand. The 10", 12", and 13" toms have 12 lugs each; the 14" tom and 18" floor tom have 16.

There is no holder mounted on the bass drum. The four larger toms mount in pairs on Slingerland's 64LP floor stands. These stands utilize the 170 holder. The top tube of each stand has a neoprene ball which is sandwiched between two molded steel castings for angle adjustment using the ball-and-cage principle. It's set off by a square-head screw located deep inside the casting. Two holes are found in the holder casting, each one accepting a D-shaped tom-tom arm, again with the ball-and-cage adjustment, and locked in place by a drum-key-operated screw. All adjustment on the 170 holder (except for height) is made with a drum key. There are seven different adjust points: separate arm height, overall lateral angle, separate arm angle and separate arm spread. Hose clamp rings are fitted in two places on each arm, as well as on the height tube for use as memory locks. Each tom-tom has a diamond-shaped mounting plate and the drum is fastened to the arm via a drum-key-operated screw. Oddly enough, there is no backing plate inside the drums. The ball-and-cage design allows for a wide range of movement. The toms can be set up far apart, or extremely close together. The holder arms themselves are very stable, and the D-shaping keeps them from twisting.

The 6" and 8" toms mount on a 105 *Grandstand* boom tom-tom stand. This stand is similar to a cymbal boom having a ratchet angle tilt, but in this case, it has a long boom arm of hexagonal steel, slightly bent at the top. The ball-and-cage method also applies here for angle

adjustment of these two small drums. The toms fit on the stand via clip brackets (naturally, not adjustable separately). More about these two stands later.

The 16 x 18 floor tom has four legs, each knurled at the top few inches, bent outward at the bottom, and capped with rubber feet. The legs locate into cast blocks, and are set in place by a direct-contact screw, instead of an eye-bolt.

All the toms have Slingerland's lifetime guaranteed pressed-steel batter hoops, which have a slight flange inwards, instead of out. The drums were fitted with *Pinstripe* heads top and bottom. Even with that thick bottom head, the toms still had full resonance. I consider the 6" and 8" toms to be pretty much useless unless one's aim is always perfect. But if you can cope with the tiny head diameters, they do have a place in the kit's tonal spectrum. Every one of the tom-toms had somewhat of a timbale-like sound with both heads on. Nevertheless, thanks to the extra depth, they could be tuned really low and still come across with more than enough volume. They're like cannons! Single-headed, the toms gained more punch, though I would still recommend some sort of external muffling.

The snare drum included with the *Magnum Force* is an 8 x 14 wood shell covered in chrome. It has 12 double-ended lugs and an internal knob damper. There are also four ventholes across the drum, presumably to quicken the release of air when the drum is struck. Slingerland's *TDR* strainer is fitted to this drum. The *TDR* is of the side-throw type, tensionable at the throw-off side. A 20-strand snare wire unit extends past the bottom hoop, connecting to the throw-off and butt sides with nylon stripping. The *TDR* does its job well and operates smoothly.

With the *Pinstripe* batter, I expected this drum to have a deep, fat sound, given its full eight inches in depth. However, the drum sounded choked-off, not at all appropriate for its size. It also had a considerable amount of ring to it, even with the muffler all the way up. (Longer tuning rods may help to solve the pitch problem.)

Slingerland has five other snare drums in the new *Magnum* line: 7 x 14 with 10 or 12 lugs, 8 x 14 with 10 lugs, and 9 x 14 with 10 or 12 lugs. All feature the new *Snapshot* strainer (which was unavailable at the time of this review). The 64LP tom stand with the 170 holder has a wide stance tubular tripod base and a nylon bushing at its first height stage. This joint is tightened with a T-bolt clamp, but strangely enough, with the nylon bushing fitted in, the tube *still* twists and sinks, even when tightened to its maximum. The next height stage which uses the holder tube is set by a directly tapped T-screw, and it does a lot better job than the bushing clamp. The stand can go high enough to accommodate any set-up and will not tip over, but the nylon bushing joint does pose a problem.

Slingerland has approached the point of "hardware overkill" with their *Grandstand* boom tom-tom stand, and two boom cymbal stands. They've gone too far. The *Grandstands* are massive and *very* heavy. Both the boom tom-tom and cymbal stands have extremely wide-spread tubular tripods, and two adjustable height tiers. Both have nylon bushings at their joints, which again, twist and turn and sink even when maximum pressure is applied to the large, hand-sized wing bolts.

Both the tom-tom and cymbal stands are identical in appearance, having ratchet tilters at the angle joint and hexagonal boom arms. At the end of the arm is a black threaded counterweight with a raised Slingerland logo. The top of the cymbal stand's arm has the same ratchet/eye-bolt casting as the stand's angle joint, but has a 5" cymbal post inserted into the eye-bolt. Slingerland seems to have wasted a lot of steel here, as the *Grandstands* can extend well past the point of usefulness even with the boom arm at its lowest—about 7 1/2 feet. Fit these in a trap case? I doubt it!

I've been told that even Slingerland feels the *Grandstands* are just too much, and they are redesigning their entire hardware line. The new *Magnum* hardware will have double or optional triple braced legs, a new locking device, and will also introduce a new tom-tom holder. I expect to be reviewing the new line soon.

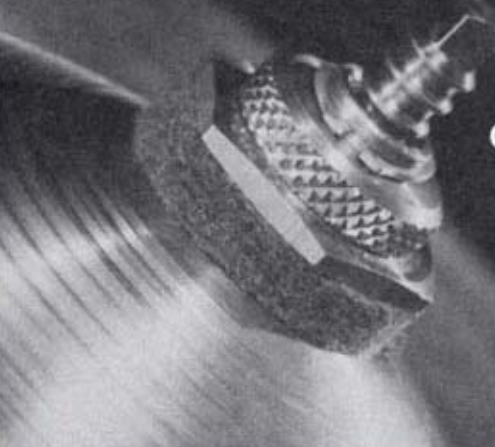
The top of the line 809 hi-hat stand is part of the *Magnum Force* arsenal. It has a tubular tripod base, black frame, and a

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hinged-heel footboard which links to an internal spring by a metal strap. The footboard resembles the *Tempo King* bass pedal and has a rubber block underneath the heel piece to help prevent skid. The top pull rod is of hexagonal steel, which assists in arresting any turning of the top cymbal. The clutch disassembles from the top. A knob-operated spur is located at the bottom of the frame, locked with a large counternut. The tripod folds from the bottom. This stand is not as tall as some others I've seen, but it does have a fairly responsive action.

The 1386 snare stand, like the rest of the hardware, has a tubular tripod base. It folds from the bottom and has a nylon insert at its height joint (which *does not* slip!) The stand uses the common basket design, adjusted up with a large four-cornered locking nut. Basket angle is adjusted by a swivel and wing bolt. The 1386 even goes low enough to comfortably seat the 8" snare drum that comes with this kit.

The *Yellow Jacket* bass drum pedal has a split footboard, metal link strap, and double external expansion springs. Each tension knob is notched to provide for exact spring adjustment, and to keep the knob from loosening while playing. Stroke is adjustable in three positions. The clamp uses the usual wing screw/

plate, but also has a cam lever beneath it. After the pedal is set once, only the lever need be moved to secure the pedal. Beater height is adjusted by a drum-key-operated screw, and its housing is set off a bit right of the footboard. There are also sprung angled spurs at the base. I noted a very springy action, but it is responsive. The *Yellow Jacket* is well engineered and sturdy. But I can't help feeling that Slingerland should have enclosed a wood beater with this pedal to help punch the sound out more.

The kit tested was covered in jet black plastic—a real glossy finish. Slingerland has a wide variety of gloss, pearl, wood and sparkle finishes—31 in all. They all look very professional, and on this kit, all the seams were hidden from the audience's view.

Slingerland is, as I've said, redesigning their hardware and tom-tom holder, and is also introducing a new snare strainer and a new drummer's throne.

The 69T *Magnum Force* is a great kit for rock 'n' roll playing. All the drums are well constructed and have *lots* of volume. They're definitely the loudest drums I've ever played. With the forthcoming hardware changes, Slingerland should have a big winner on their hands. RETAIL: \$2860.

